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AUTHOR	Forbes, Norma
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ABSTRACT

The report summarizes information from a 5-year study, begun in 1977, of the effects of the introduction of commercial and educational television to isolated communities in rural Alaska. It is intended primarily for residents of villages which participated in the study, for the staff of the schools which were involved, and for Alaskan policy makers. Following a brief description of the study design and viewing habits of the subjects, the report outlines findings regarding the influence of television on students' mental skills, English language skills, desire to migrate, goals, sex stereotypes, attitudes toward self and others, and perceptions of "most important person." The report discusses three types of influences which should be considered when television is introduced into traditional societies: that television may make people dissatisfied with the goods and services they buy and the lives they lead, television's role as a "thief of time," and television's influence on values. To reduce the negative impact of television, the report suggests that the content and form of television in rural Alaska need not be a carbon copy of television in the rest of the United States and that the way television is viewed can be changed by teaching critical viewing skills. (NEC)

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Television's Effects on Rural Alaska

Summary of Final Report

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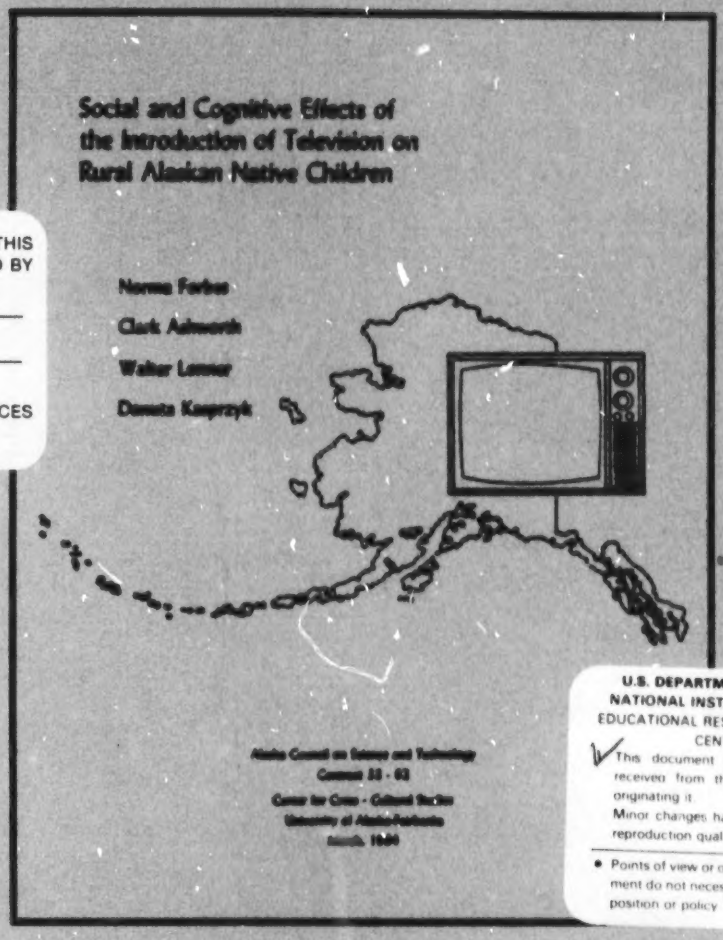

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Prepared by
Norma Forbes
Center for Cross-Cultural Studies
University of Alaska-Fairbanks
Fairbanks, Alaska

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Introduction

This report summarizes information from a five-year study of the effects of the introduction of entertainment television to isolated communities in rural Alaska. It is intended primarily for residents of the villages which participated in the study, for the staff of the schools which were involved, and for Alaskan policymakers.

In 1976 the Alaska State Legislature voted to fund the Satellite Television Demonstration Project, a one-year experimental project to bring educational and commercial television to the state's isolated rural communities. Most of the communities to be served were Native villages, Eskimo, Indian or Aleut. To no one's surprise the demonstration project was not terminated at the end of its first year, and delivery of television by the state's satellite is now in its eighth year. The channel which originally broadcast educational and service programs in the daytime, and entertainment programs at night, has been turned over to entertainment and a full-time educational channel has been added. The expansion of the system from the twenty-three villages it originally served has brought it close to fulfilling the legislature's intent that every community in Alaska with more than twenty-five residents should have satellite television.

The 1976 legislature had instructed the Governor's Office of Telecommunications to demonstrate the feasibility of distributing television via communications satellite in Alaska. No mention was made of the possible social, cultural or psychological impacts of television delivered by the satellite. Researchers at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks saw that the Television Demonstration Project could provide information about the effects of television on an essentially television-naive audience, information not easily available in the rest of the United States where most of the population had been exposed to television for a number of years. They hoped that information gained from a study of television's effects in rural Alaska might be useful to rural viewers and state policymakers as well as to the research community.

Based on the research of television's effects which had been done elsewhere, the University of Alaska staff selected a group of measures which might provide objective evidence of changes resulting from the introduction of television. Additional measures were included in response to concerns of Native parents and Native leaders. Most residents of the rural communities to be served by the satellite welcomed television; however, there were some concerns. Native parents expected television to improve their children's English language skills and to reduce boredom, but they also feared that television would increase children's desire to move away from the villages to urban areas. Native leaders feared that television would reduce use of Native languages and undermine Native cultural values.

The first visit to villages participating in this study was in early 1977 before television was established, the second in 1979 when half of the villages had television, and the third in 1982 when all villages had television. Some villages which participated in the study were visited three times, some twice. The study was aimed at grade-school children and their parents. Naturally, as the study progressed, students first tested and interviewed in the earlier phases grew older, and the 1982 phase included

students up to 20 years old. A total of 593 students was tested and interviewed in the three data collections.

A few cautionary words are in order before discussing the results of this study. As is the case in all field research, the available money and time limited the number of possible effects studied and the way the study was carried out. Some effects of the introduction of television, like the reduction in visiting between households, are so well known and firmly established that there was no point in including them. Some desirable methods of measurement were too costly; for example, having a researcher live in a village for several years to track day-to-day changes. The number of students involved in the study also was restricted by time, money, and the size of the villages, and that restriction has an important effect on study outcomes. When a study uses the type of measures this study used, the number of participants affects the measures' ability to detect effects. In general, the smaller the number of participants, the larger the effect must be in order to be detected. An effect may exist undetected if the sample size is too small.

Research elsewhere has shown that viewers do not passively accept everything that television broadcasts. Viewers play an active and selective role in processing the information presented. What viewers do with the information depends on such factors as their age, their past experience, and their pre-existing values and beliefs. Therefore, the impact of any one television program is not necessarily the same for everyone in the audience. The effects of television on rural viewers may be modified by how much of the program's message is understood, or misunderstood, which in turn may be related to the viewer's command of English or experience in the world outside the village. In reporting the results, the influences of age, sex, culture and exposure to the outside world are considered.

Although Athabaskan, Aleut, and non-Native villages were included in the study in some years, the results reported here are those from the Inupiat Eskimo and the Tlingit and Haida Indian villages because they made up the majority of participants. Non-Alaskan readers should be aware that the Inupiat Eskimos of Northwest Alaska and the Tlingit or Haida Indians of Southeast are as different from one another in culture, and in their history of contact with the majority culture of the United States, as they are from Anglo-Americans in urban America. In general, Inupiat Eskimo are more traditional, more isolated, more likely to speak their native language, and adults are less likely to have had access to schooling than is the case for the Tlingit and Haida. Tlingits and Haidas are regarded by non-Native Alaskans as the most acculturated of Alaska's Native groups. Nevertheless, they have a strong sense of cultural identity.

Television's Effects

A wide range of variables were measured over the years in this study, including children's attitudes toward themselves, their own ethnic group, toward White people, Black people, life in the villages, life in Anchorage, and their views on what are appropriate activities and occupations for boys as opposed to girls. Occupational and educational goals were measured, as well as English language vocabulary and the desire to leave the village. Some mental skills were measured, particularly those mental skills in which Native people of the North have been found to excel. Finally, attitudes of both

children and adults toward television itself were measured; what they like to watch, whether they believe that what they see is real, how families control their children's viewing, and how viewing television has affected the use of other media such as books and radio.

The use of television

It is difficult to compare directly the viewing habits of rural Alaskans with those of viewers in the rest of the United States because the same hours and number of programs are not available to both. However, the number of hours viewed by Tlingits and Haidas is approximately the same as the average in the rest of the United States. The Inupiats, children and adults, report watching more television than Tlingits and Haidas. Adults with more education watch less television, as is true nationwide. Every child interviewed in 1982 reported at least one television set in his or her home.

For children, the "Dukes of Hazard" was the most popular individual program with cartoons and movies also among the top three choices. For adults, "Dallas," "All My Children," and the news were the top choices. "Little House on the Prairie" was a perennial favorite, appearing in the top five choices in both 1979 and 1982. Almost half of the parents in Southeast, where cable may bring "R" rated movies, named uncensored (sex) movies as the worst thing on television. Although parents in Northwest Alaska had access to only the state satellite, one-fifth of them named "sex shows" as the worst thing on television.

Approximately half of the parents interviewed in 1982 thought that the number of commercials, the violence, and the sex or bad language on television were problems. They also felt the relative lack of programs about Alaska and Alaskans was a problem. Tlingits and Haidas were more likely than Inupiats to see these things as problems. On the other hand, more than half of the parents rated television as enjoyable, interesting, exciting and good. A majority of parents said they would like to see changes in television; however, about half of the Southeast parents and forty percent of the Inupiat parents did not know who to ask about making such changes. When asked "Who chooses the programs which are broadcast?" only one in four correctly named the Rural Alaska Telecommunications Network (RATNET) committee or their representative on it.

The responses of children and their parents were in agreement in showing Tlingit and Haida parents exerting more control than Inupiat parents over what and when their children watched. Almost all parents and children also agreed that children saw things they wanted on television. Games, toys and bicycles rated high on the list of desired items. Cars were frequently desired, particularly by teen-age boys, and many teen-age girls wanted clothes. Parents also wanted things they had seen on television, but the list of desired items was very different in Southeast than in Northwest. The Tlingit and Haida parents in Southeast wanted household or kitchen gadgets, records or tapes, and wanted to travel to places seen on television. Inupiat parents wanted furniture, cars, food items and running water, in that order.

The introduction of television had a predictable effect on the use of books, movies, and radio. Movies suffered the greatest impact: prior to television every village had movies at least once a week; after television, movies were

rarely shown. Radio also suffered: the amount of time spent listening to the radio dropped sharply for both adults and children. Music programs are preferred by the majority of young people who continued to use radio, particularly by older students, by those who had spent more time outside the village, and by those who lived in Southeast. The introduction of television had no measurable influence on the reading habits of adults, presumably because their habits were already formed and well established. However, for children there was clear evidence of the negative impact of television on the reading of books. Fewer books were read and the length of time since a book had been read increased. These effects appeared within the first two years of television's introduction, leveled off, and were maintained. Television's effect on the reading of magazines was the opposite of its effect on the reading of books. Magazine reading increased and, unlike the effect on books, it continued to climb with longer exposure to television. However, the increase involved only certain types of magazines, magazines such as Teen, Off Road, Sports, Life, and People. The percentage of students reading news magazines did not change and the readership of Alaska magazine declined.

Teachers in rural villages have reported that when television was first introduced, they were deluged with questions each morning about the reality of the programs which had been seen the night before. Viewers' beliefs about the reality of television have been of particular interest to researchers because past research has shown that viewers who believe they are seeing real events, such as news clips, are more likely to imitate the viewed behavior. In 1979, interviewed children were asked to name programs that were about real people or things that really happened. Canadian researchers had reported that Native children in the Canadian Arctic described as real more programs that were actually fictional than non-Native children did. Alaskan Native children also named a higher percentage of incorrect (fictional) programs. Older children, children in Southeast, and children who had had more experience outside the villages named fewer incorrect programs.

In 1982 a more extensive series of questions was asked about the reality of specific programs. First, a general question about whether the program was about real people and things that really happen was asked, followed by specific questions such as whether Renko (in "Hill Street Blues") was Renko's real name. As expected, older children gave more realistic answers than younger to all of the questions. Older children, children in Southeast, and children who had longer exposure to television tended to give more realistic answers to the specific questions. However, in response to the general question as to whether the program was about real people and things that really happened, children in Southeast and those who had had longer exposure to television were more likely to give the less reality-based answer, that is, to believe that the programs portrayed social reality. In other words, the longer rural Alaskan children are exposed to television, the more likely they are to believe that what they see represents expected and usual behavior, even when they know programs involve actors and acting. Research done elsewhere suggests that this also is true of children who are not different or isolated from the majority culture.

Mental skills

Both early explorers and modern researchers have reported that the people of the far north tend to have superior ability in locating themselves in three-dimensional space and other spatial-perceptual skills. Some believe these skills are inherited, others that they are a result of living and working in the tundra environment of the far north. Modern researchers associate this ability with several paper and pencil tests designed to measure spacial-perceptual skills. Three of these measures were included in this study: Raven Matrices, the Embedded Figure Test, and Kohs Blocks. The Embedded Figure Test requires locating a hidden pattern within a larger pattern. Kohs Blocks requires analysis and synthesis of patterns. Raven Matrices requires analysis of patterns and relationships between patterns and has been widely used, and widely criticized, as a culture-free measure of intelligence.

Of the three measures, only the Embedded Figure Test showed direct effects of television for all children tested. The children with the most recent introduction to television had the greatest improvement in their scores, a result in agreement with the results from research done in Israel where younger children improved their scores when exposed to television more than older children who already had developed some mastery of that particular skill. No statement can be made about the Raven Matrices results because they were not consistent across samples. Further analyses of the Raven scores may find an interpretable pattern in the complex results which were found. The results from the Kohs Blocks showed a consistent pattern across both years, scores for both girls and boys in Northwest decreased with exposure to television, the effect being stronger for girls. The differences in results between the three tests probably reflect the differences between the tasks they present. The Embedded Figure Test presents a task which involves some of the same processes that are used in viewing the television screen: both require visual exploration and attention to detail within a confined space, skills which are mastered at a relatively early age. The skills involved in the tasks presented by Raven Matrices and Kohs Blocks are more complex, involving abstraction and synthesis of patterned stimuli, and these skills continue to develop until adulthood.

English language skills

Parents in Alaska, like parents in the Canadian Arctic and Somoa, expected their children's English language skills to improve when television was introduced. However, the vocabulary test used in this study indicates that this has not happened. These results are not surprising since the acquisition of language is an interactive, not a passive, process and the vocabulary level in most entertainment programs is not high. This does not mean that programs such as "Sesame Street" have not improved young children's language skills. However, "Sesame Street" was so widely and consistently shown on tape machines in schools even before television's introduction that it was impossible to determine what effect viewing "Sesame Street" at home might have. Anecdotal evidence suggests that television has contributed to the slang phrases used by young people in the village, which may give the impression of greater English skills even when their formal vocabulary level has not changed.

The desire to migrate

Although Native parents expected television to have a positive effect on their children's language skills, many of them feared its influence on their children's desire to stay in the villages. Population pressure, the increasing dependence on a cash economy, and the shortage of wage-paying jobs in the villages already had encouraged many village residents to move to urban areas, at least temporarily. Children were asked where they would live as adults if they could live anywhere in the world they wished to live, including their home village. Almost two-thirds of the children interviewed wished to live somewhere other than their home village when they were grown. However, the percentage of children in any one village who wished to live elsewhere differed with the size of the village and the culture area. In the smaller Inupiat villages slightly more than half of the children wished to remain in their home village while in the larger Inupiat villages and in the Tlingit and Haida villages less than one-third of the children would choose to stay in the village. In the Northwest more Inupiat girls than boys would choose to leave their home area, while in Southeast there was no significant difference between boys' and girls' desire to leave. The most important factor in predicting whether children would wish to leave their home village and how far away they would choose to go was the size of the village they lived in. Other important factors were their culture area (Northwest or Southeast) and how much time they had previously spent outside the village. Contrary to expectations, television does not influence children to desire to leave their home village.

Nor does television affect children's attitudes toward life in Anchorage. A rating scale which included items such as friendly, dangerous, like to live there, and exciting was used to rate Anchorage and life in the village. Student ratings of Anchorage showed no effects from exposure to television in any of the years the scale was used. Life in Anchorage did not seem more exciting, dangerous, or friendly after viewing the many programs on television which have city settings. There was some evidence of an increase in negative attitudes toward life in the village after exposure to television; however, the evidence is not strong and results from other measures do not support it. Older students have more negative attitudes toward life in the village than younger students, but they also are more negative toward life in Anchorage.

Children's goals

Research elsewhere in the United States has indicated that television has an important influence on children's occupational goals. Because the introduction of television would allow village children to see many occupational roles portrayed on the screen which they would not ordinarily observe, it was predicted that the variety and relative status of the occupations of interest to village children would change after exposure to television. Two questions were asked: how they would like to make a living if they could do anything they wished to do and how they expected to make a living when they were through school. Students in Southeast were more likely to aspire to professional or technical jobs than were students in Northwest. However, the difference in occupational goals was greater between the sexes than it was between culture areas. Girls were three times more likely to

desire professional or technical jobs than boys. Girls named professional and technical jobs most often, clerical next, and public service third. In order of preference, boys in Northwest chose skilled and semi-skilled labor jobs, public service jobs, subsistence and fishing, and professional and technical. Boys in Southeast chose fishing, public service jobs, professional and technical, and skilled and semi-skilled--in that order. The responses were spread over twenty-seven categories so the actual number of students choosing any one category is relatively small. This was particularly true because half the students in the sample gave unclassifiable answers. Unclassifiable answers included inappropriate answers such as "get rich" or "go to states," indeterminate answers such as "have a job" or "work," and descriptive answers such as "a high-paying job." This is approximately the same percentage of Native students who gave indeterminate responses in 1977 and 1979 and there was no difference between students with different lengths of exposure to television. In contrast, only four percent of the Anglo-American students in logging camps included in the 1977 data collection gave unclassifiable answers. Television did not change the variety or the type of occupations of interest to Native children in rural areas.

A question on one of the paper and pencil measures asked students whether there was prejudice against Natives in the job market, that is, if a Native and a White had equal skills would they have an equal opportunity to get a job. Feelings of being discriminated against in the job market decreased sharply between 1979 and 1982: less than half of the students felt there was discrimination in 1982. Students in Southeast were more likely to feel discrimination than those in Northwest. In Southeast, boys were more likely than girls to feel there was discrimination, while in Northwest, girls were more likely to feel discrimination. Television was not related to those feelings.

To assess the possibility that television might affect educational as well as occupational goals, two questions were asked: "How far do you want to go in school?" and "How would you feel if you had to stop school now?" Native students' educational goals were higher than those of non-Native students in the logging camps which were part of the first phase of the study. Girls' educational goals were higher than those of boys. The average response for Southeast students was between "some college training" and "college graduation" in both 1979 and 1982. The average response for Northwest students was somewhat lower, between "technical school after high school graduation" and "some college training." Southeast parents had higher educational goals for their children than Northwest parents. This was expected because the Southeast parents interviewed averaged almost four years more education than the interviewed Northwest parents. Students' attitude toward school was generally positive. The average response to the question, "How would you feel if you had to stop school now?" was "I'd try hard to continue." Girls were more positive toward school than boys, and older children were more positive than younger. Exposure to television had no relation to educational goals or attitude toward school.

Sex stereotypes

A research project which examined the effects of the introduction of television to a small town in British Columbia found evidence of increased sex-role stereotyping after two years of television. Increased sex-role

stereotyping means students saw greater differences between the kinds of activities or occupations which are suitable for girls and those which are suitable for boys. Sex stereotyping was measured by a pencil and paper measure which asked the students to rate boys and girls on personality traits such as "noisy" or "tough," behaviors such as "cries when hurt" or "swears and uses dirty language," and appropriate occupations such as doctor or fishing. Other research has confirmed that television increases sex stereotyping and that it presents a view of the world more sex stereotyped than real life. The same measure used in British Columbia was administered to rural Alaskan students in 1979 and 1982. Comparisons of the scores of the pre-television British Columbia children and the pre-television Alaskan children in the same age range indicate Alaskan Native children were more traditional, i. e., more stereotyped, in their thinking about the sexes than British Columbia children before exposure to television. The 1979 and 1982 testing provided clear evidence that exposure to television had increased further Native students' sex stereotyping, particularly in relation to which occupations are seen as appropriate for boys and which for girls, the same effect which had been found in British Columbia.

Attitudes toward self and others

This category includes attitudes toward one's self, toward one's own ethnic group, toward Black people, and toward White people. The rating technique used has been used in many countries and in several previous studies in Alaska, including the 1970 National Assessment of Indian Youth. As has been the case in other studies of children throughout the world, Native students rated themselves and their own group the highest. The rating for White people followed that of Alaskan Natives, and the least familiar group, Black people, was rated lowest. The relation between the ratings for the different groups remained the same in 1977, 1979, and 1982, although there were changes in some of the individual ratings. In general, as students grew older, all the ratings in this category became more negative.

A number of articles have been written suggesting that television has a negative effect on the self-esteem of minority children. However, very little evidence is available to support such an assumption. Our results indicate that there is a small but significant negative effect on the self-esteem of some Native students as a result of viewing television and that the negative effect is most likely to appear among older students in Southeast. However, the evidence for that negative effect is not as strong or clearcut as, for example, the evidence for the increase in sex stereotyping.

Between 1977 and 1979 television had an unmistakably positive effect on the attitudes of Native students toward Black people. It was during that time that the mini-series "Roots" was shown on television and most of that positive effect seems to have been associated with "Roots." That positive effect was maintained through 1982 for those students who saw "Roots" when they were old enough to understand the message of the program, but not for younger students.

There was no evidence from this rating scale of a change in attitude toward White people or Natives as a result of exposure to television. The presence of first-hand information in the village on Native people and on White people may take precedence over such secondary sources of information as television.

Some evidence of shifts in students' attitudes toward their own ethnic group was provided by another measure which included the questions, "Which of these people would you invite to your home for dinner?" and "If your snow-go (or outboard motor) were broken, which person could fix it?" Students were to respond by choosing one person from a display of pictures of Black, White, and Native people. Between 1979 and 1982 there was a sharp increase in the number of students who would choose a Native person in response to those questions. However, there was no indication the change was associated with exposure to television.

Most important person

The last result to be presented may be a secondary effect of the changes in community interaction which accompany the introduction of television. Students and their parents had been asked "Who is the most important person you can think of," "Who is the most important person in the village," " . . . in the state," and ". . . in the world?" This was a modified version of a question a Canadian researcher had asked Inuit in Arctic communities which were receiving commercial television by satellite. It was expected that after exposure to television, students and their parents would be more likely to name national or international figures. Instead, answers from those who had been exposed to television were more likely to shift from naming a local or state leader to naming someone in their own family. This was true of both parents and students in 1982 as well as 1979.

Discussion

In the preceding section the highlights of the evidence from the study of the effects of television in rural Alaska which began in 1976 have been presented. We have seen that television has changed some attitudes and behaviors but left no measurable imprint upon others and that its effects varied, influencing some viewers more than others. Dr. Wilbur Schramm, who has studied the influence of television on traditional societies throughout the world, lists three types of potential influences which should be considered when television is introduced. Schramm's three influence types provide a perspective for examining the significance of the evidence from this study. Although the design of this study makes it possible to separate the effects of television from those of other influences, it should be kept in mind that television is only one of the influences rural Alaskans have been exposed to in recent years: schools, the Oil Pipeline, the Claims Settlement Act, snow machines, Public Health, all have contributed to change.

The first type of influence to be considered is that television may make people dissatisfied with the goods they buy and the lives they lead. Certainly, the number and type of things seen on television which were named as desired by children and adults indicate television has generated some dissatisfaction. However, there also is evidence that those who have had television longer and those who have lived outside the village are somewhat less likely to desire things seen on television, offering some hope that television's influence will lessen as its novelty wears off. Although the desire for material possessions may lessen, it is not likely to disappear, and television's failure to improve childrens' command of English or to acquaint them with possible occupations suggest that it generates desires without

providing information which might aid in satisfying those desires. However, the desire for material possessions does not seem to be linked with the desire to leave the village. Other influences seem more important in determining the wish to live somewhere other than the village.

The second influence to be considered is television's role as a "thief of time." Research in Australia, Samoa, the Canadian Arctic, and many other parts of the world has found that television takes time away from community events and social life. After the novelty of television has worn off there is usually a slight recovery in attendance at community events, but attendance never returns to pre-television levels. Changes in the patterns of visiting and attending community events have secondary effects which can be seen in the shifts that occurred in response to the "most important person" question in this study. Whether the changes in who is important are seen as a strengthening of the basic family unit, or as a weakening of community ties, they indicate a change in traditional social structure and interaction in the villages--for better or for worse. The end of community movies when television was introduced also has secondary effects, not because of their entertainment function, which television has replaced, but because they brought all the residents of the village to a central meeting place and because, in many villages, they provided a source of revenue for community or school projects. The time stolen from the reading of books may have social as well as academic consequences. Young people's switch to reading popular culture magazines further exposes them to the majority culture values presented on television.

The third influence of concern is television's influence on values. It is widely agreed that television emphasizes the importance of success in business, of material possessions, and the effectiveness of violent behavior. When parents express concern about sex or violence on television, they are usually not concerned about their children immediately imitating the behavior on the screen. However, they are concerned about their children believing such behavior is acceptable, and the consequences of such beliefs in the future. Many social critics believe the primary importance of television's influence lies in its ability to come into the family living room and define and illustrate the range of behavior which is acceptable and expected.

Although some writers have claimed television only reflects society's existing values, studies of television's content have demonstrated that it does not accurately reflect behavior in the real world. Two examples of behavior on television which do not reflect acceptable behavior in the real world involve driving habits and drinking of alcoholic beverages. A teacher in one of the villages in this study complained that he could not convince his high school age students that people in the world outside the village really didn't drive the way the people in the "Dukes of Hazard" drive. Researchers confirm that the driving behavior television portrays is usually dangerous, illegal, and completely unrepresentative of the real world. The alcohol consumption on television is far heavier than that in the real world and is portrayed as socially desirable, as an appropriate response to stress, and rarely has the negative consequences it has in real life. Unlike real life, on television alcohol is drunk more than twice as often as coffee and tea and fourteen times as frequently as soft drinks. The potential effects of such distortions should be considered remembering that the majority of young people in rural Alaska believe that television shows how people behave in the real world, and that the belief that what is seen is real increases the tendency to imitate.

Although the emphasis in the preceding discussion has been on the negative influences of television, we should not lose sight of the fact that television has a great unrealized potential for good. That potential has a greater chance of being realized in Alaska than it does in the rest of the United States because the control of, and responsibility for, the form and content of television ultimately rests in the hands of elected representatives of the viewers rather than in the hands of commercial interests.

What could be done to reduce the negative impact of television and realize some of its potential for good? Probably the first step is to recognize that television in Alaska, rural Alaska at least, need not be a carbon copy of television in the rest of the United States. For example, commercial entertainment programs need not be segregated from educational or public service programs. The number of people viewing any particular program is dependent on the nature of the program which preceded it; therefore, it may be in the public interest to show a public service program in the time slot following "Dallas." Increased regionalization in order to meet the needs of special audiences is another possibility which has been suggested in the past by telecommunication experts in Alaska.

The content as well as the form of Alaskan television need not be identical to television in the "lower 48." However, exploring alternatives to network programming costs money, and producing quality programs of regional interest costs even more. On the other hand, in terms of social costs, the price of meeting the hardware needs of the satellite system, while ignoring its content needs, is likely to be far higher in the long run. Some excellent programs of regional interest have been produced by the state department of education and other agencies for the educational channel. The Northwest Arctic School District Instructional Television Center has produced one program which directly addresses needs discussed in this report. Titled "What are you going to do after high school?" it deals with "the realities of what happens after graduation" for Native students. Its effectiveness might have been increased if parents also had viewed it.

Not only television itself, but the way it is viewed, is open to change. Research has shown that good programming is more effective when adults are present to interact with the child viewer and the effects of bad programming can be modified or eliminated by the interaction of adults. Through schools, or through television itself, parents could be made more aware of the role they could play and the most effective ways to intervene. Schools can play an important role with critical television viewing skills curriculums. Such a curriculum not only teaches children how television programs are created and how to view commercial television critically, but also uses commercial television as a tool for developing vocabulary, analytical skills and general knowledge. The department of education has supported critical television viewing skills workshops but availability of funds have limited the effort.

The potential for television as a positive force in the lives of children and adults exists, and it can be achieved without damaging its entertainment value. However, it will require action and creativity on the part of both viewers and their representatives. Part of the dream of the last frontier is, that given a new opportunity, a new and better world can be created. Whether telecommunication in Alaska will represent a new and better world, or a watered-down copy of the old, remains to be seen.

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